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**ENCOURAGING YOUR COLLEAGUES • BY TONI BRISTOL**

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There is a tremendous amount of positive information about vision therapy available on the internet and in the news, and it continues to grow. In order to meet the demand that this is generating, we need to increase the number of optometrists who provide vision therapy and/or refer.

Please take a moment and think back to how you became involved with vision therapy. Did someone special take the time to walk you through the hoops until you saw the value of VT? I am sure most of you can think of someone. My point is it took someone you could speak with, someone who perhaps got you to look at things differently than you were before, and someone to help you along this path.

Many of you have visited with friends and colleagues who had successful VT practices prior to opening your doors. Some of you still visit other practices to get ideas and to improve your own programs. Where would you be today if this were not possible?

Over the years, I have heard many lament that they have tried to speak with other ODs about VT, but their words fell on deaf ears. Yet, after communicating effectively, some of these same doctors are now getting referrals on a regular basis from other ODs. The secret is to change your approach in speaking with your colleagues.

When you go to local and national meetings, please take the time to speak with your colleagues. Don't know what to say? Try the following:

1. Start a discussion about the need to have a specialty or niche service (theirs may be a contact lens specialty, designer eyewear, disease treatment, etc.; yours is VT).
2. Ask about the VT program when they were in optometry school. What was their exposure to VT?
3. What has been their experience with VT? Have they ever tried any VT with their patients? Were they pleased with the outcomes?
4. Have they referred patients for VT and felt like they didn't get adequate feedback on the outcomes? Use the time to indicate that you recognize this is one of the biggest challenges in co-management: communication – and you give that top priority.
5. Have they ever seen a patient before and after doing VT to measure the results or get feedback on how it helped the patient? Once you have gotten their answer, this may very well open the door to a discussion about some of your recent outcomes, or some special stories about your VT patients. You can also mention that you always make a point of sharing the outcome with the referring doctor in the patient's own words; providing the opportunity for the doctor to experience the patient's perception of improvement.

6. You could ask them about some observations you would expect they would have about patients; for example: Have they ever had patients who clinically had the same numbers and should require the exact same prescription, yet responded differently and required a different prescription? Have they thought about why that would be?
7. Whenever possible throughout this discussion you should mention how much recent research there has been to support the work being done in VT.

This should get an interesting discussion going and hopefully will raise the OD's interest in VT. The most important thing to remember during these preliminary questions is not to get defensive or upset if the person says they think "VT is bunk." One doctor in particular shared her story with me about how she got started doing VT, and believe me, it took persistence and caring on the part of her colleague to change her view because she indeed thought VT was "voodoo." But, she got past it, and now has one of the top 100% VT practices in the country. The important point here is that she never would have changed her mind if it weren't for that one doctor who took the time to educate her.

If it turns out they are actively doing pencil push-ups or some other form of home VT, don't condemn them. Congratulate them on doing something. Ask about any interesting cases they have had. Find out what types of cases they are treating. What kind of feedback are they getting from their patients? Have they ever thought of doing an in-office program? If they have any questions or interest in possibly learning more about VT, offer to help.

If the person is doing some VT in their practice, but not involved in COVD, I would suggest asking them the following:

1. Have they ever heard of COVD?
2. Have they ever been a member of COVD?
3. What is their understanding of what COVD is all about?
4. If they were a member at one time, find out why they dropped their membership. (You might be surprised to find it was because of the need for a significant amount of CE credits, or some other requirement that has changed.)

Mention all the things you have found helpful in being a COVD member and suggest they visit the COVD website. Be sure to get their business card, and offer to stay in touch.

COVD is a way for colleagues with common interests to gather together on an international level to help nurture the growth of VT. If they want to know why they should become

## ENCOURAGING YOUR COLLEAGUES (CONTINUED)

a member, aside from all the standard reasons, please keep in mind, the larger COVD's membership, the larger the voice and the faster positive changes can happen.

If you have tried to speak with your colleagues and been unsuccessful, please let your COVD State Coordinator know so they can help you refine your approach.

You can help by spreading the word about VT outcomes to your colleagues. If a colleague is interested in learning more, you can take a step further and personally help him or her. One of the best ways to help is to encourage membership in COVD and becoming part of the team. If they are not ready

to make the jump, suggest they attend the annual meeting with you to get a taste of what COVD is all about.

The demand for VT is growing. We need to unite everyone in the field to help support and accelerate this growth. Your help in making this happen is needed and will make a difference!

*Toni Bristol is an Affiliate Member of COVD and a Practice Management Consultant in Montrose, California. Ms. Bristol is COVD's Public Awareness Campaign consultant; in addition she serves on the COVD President's Advisory Council. She can be reached by email at [tonibristol@expansionconsultants.com](mailto:tonibristol@expansionconsultants.com)*

## CALL FOR STUDENT RESEARCH PAPERS AND POSTERS!

BY SILVIA HAN, FOURTH YEAR STUDENT AT SCCO

Research is essential to developing advancements in optometry, especially in developmental optometry. It will help better meet patients' needs and improve patient care. With new research findings, optometrists can provide best patient care and offer them better treatment options. COVD seeks to "advance excellence in optometric vision therapy through education," which is facilitated by good research. COVD is currently soliciting abstracts for papers and posters to be presented at the 42nd Annual Meeting, which will be held from October 16th-20th, 2012 in Fort Worth, Texas.

The deadline for submission of abstracts is June 11th, 2012. Since most optometry school curricula require completion of a research project, students can submit a paper or poster detailing their research. In addition, if you are working with a faculty member on a research project, grants are available for projects related to oculomotor, binocular vision, visual information processing and learning-related vision problems, and vision therapy. The deadline for grant applications is April 9th, 2012. Research is important for the optometric profession, so students are highly encouraged to participate.

*Silvia Han is the COVD National Student Liaison and is a fourth year student at Southern California College of Optometry*

### APPLY NOW for 2012 Research Grant Awards

Applications for COVD 2012 Research Grants for optometrists, optometric educators, and other vision scientists are now available on the COVD website or by contacting the COVD office.

Thanks to the generous donation from the Jacqueline Clark Trust in 2010 we were able to create the Research Reserve Fund. Interest from that fund and donations made to the Presidents Research Fund are used to pay the research grants awarded. Thanks to the foresight of Jacqueline Clark and our regular donors, we're able to increase funding available.

This year grants of up to \$12,000 are available to support research related to oculomotor, binocular vision, visual information processing and learning-related vision problems and vision therapy. Grants can be used to initiate new research

or support continuing active research programs. Only COVD members are eligible to apply for a grant.

**\*\*\* Deadline for receipt of grant applications is April 9, 2012\*\*\***

Funding will be provided beginning July 31 for research to be conducted during the 2012-2013 academic year. All applications are reviewed by the COVD Research Committee, which makes recommendations to the Board of Directors for the selection of grant recipients.

Questions regarding the grant application process can be directed to the COVD office at [info@covd.org](mailto:info@covd.org).